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General and complete disarmament

Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

II. Replies from Governments

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[28 July 2004]

For the second consecutive year and by an increasing majority, the General Assembly adopted, at its fifty-eighth ordinary session, a resolution entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation".

The resolution, submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement, addresses an extremely topical and important issue and reflects the non-aligned countries' shared view that multilateralism and solutions agreed on multilaterally, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are the only sustainable way to address the problems of disarmament and international security.

Many discussions have been held in recent years concerning this issue, and various approaches have been taken in the political and academic sphere, ranging from the traditional concept on which the United Nations is based, i.e. international cooperation and the principles of international law, through new paradigms seeking to justify a multilateralism of a new type, characterized as "effective multilateralism", with features that differ greatly according to who is using the term.

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"Effective multilateralism" has been used by the most powerful countries as an argument for conducting the process of United Nations reform in pursuit of their own main objectives. They accuse the United Nations, its agenda, some of its bodies and many of its resolutions of being outdated and ineffective when the actual reason for their ineffectiveness is the main international actors' lack of political will to implement them.

Perhaps the most disturbing and dangerous of these approaches is the one that bypasses the traditional systems of international bodies and agreements in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation on the grounds that it is obsolete and not geared to current international conditions and promotes a multilateralism based on associations and agreements by certain "democratic" States which, acting outside the United Nations, the principles set forth in the Charter and the norms of international law, are claiming the right to determine which States are failing to comply with international legal instruments and what steps should be taken to deter or disarm them. The "duty to prevent" together with the questionable "responsibility to protect" continue to erode the principle of State sovereignty and to promote intervention as a legal norm and principle in international relations.

The so-called Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is one of the most recent examples. This initiative, which is being promoted mainly by the United States, claims to be a "response to the growing challenge posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, and related materials ..." and proposes steps that target both States and groups characterized as terrorists. Its highly selective approach focuses on horizontal proliferation rather than disarmament and the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

The PSI is fully consistent with the political and military doctrine designed by President Bush of the United States and complements the objectives of the new National Security Strategy, based on the doctrine of pre-emptive attack, and the new National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, adopted by the Bush administration on 10 December 2002. This new paradigm is no longer centred on deterrence and containment and now gives priority to offensive measures against hostile States or groups, advocating much more aggressive measures than the traditional ones of diplomacy, arms control, multilateral agreements and export controls.

The PSI is a serious threat to multilateralism, cooperation and control in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, defined in the multilateral legal framework of treaties and in the mandate of the relevant international organizations, of wide international recognition, such as the International Atomic Energy Organization, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Convention on Biological Weapons and the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The ultimate objective of the PSI is clearly to change international norms and practices for the interception of ships carrying weapons of mass destruction, by establishing a new legal regime expanding the recognized rules governing the interception of ships, although an attempt has initially been made to justify the initiative within the existing legal order governing this matter, and by advocating measures that gradually limit the transport capacity of "suspect" countries and going so far as to undertake drastic measures that are extremely unilateral in nature.

Cuba reiterates once again that if multilateralism is to be genuinely effective it must foster cooperation and peaceful and civilized coexistence between peoples and countries independently of their size, level of development or military power and must also respect the principle of self-determination of peoples and full national sovereignty, full respect for the cultural identity of each people and the broadest possible freedom of exchange and trade.

Cuba believes that verification of international agreements plays a primordial role in the promotion of multilateralism in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The multilateral instruments on disarmament and arms control have verification mechanisms that are non-discriminatory and designed in such a way that, while promoting ongoing consultations and cooperation between the parties to resolve disputes and facilitate the fulfilment of obligations, they discourage recourse to unilateral measures.

Cuba will continue to defend its ideal of preserving peace, reaffirming multilateralism and strengthening international cooperation. Cuba will once again support the resolution entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation" at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.